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To the Graduate Program:

This project, entitled "Fostering Self-Assessment Strategies as a Learning Tool for ELLs" and written by Harriet Rickert, is presented to the Graduate Program of Greensboro College. I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a Major in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

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Michelle Plaisance, Advisor

We have reviewed this
Project and recommend its
acceptance

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FOSTERING SELF-ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES AS A LEARNING TOOL FOR ELLS

Presented to
the Graduate Program
of
Greensboro College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

by
Harriet Rickert

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Advisor: Dr. Michelle Plaisance

Abstract

Self-assessment helps to develop a number of skills that are vital for furthering English language learning, such as fostering learner autonomy, promoting critical thinking and encouraging goal setting. Despite the many benefits self-assessment can provide ELLs, the North Carolina education system currently places much more emphasis on standardized, teacher-led testing. Therefore, there is generally a lack of instructional knowledge and teacher training surrounding formative, self-assessment strategies, especially regarding how they can be utilized with ELLs in mainstream classrooms. This paper examines the numerous advantages of using self-assessment with ELLs and offers recommendations for how teachers can implement self-assessment methods with ELLs in their classroom. This project also provides a *K-5 ELL Self-Assessment Teacher Toolkit*, which can be used by individual elementary classroom teachers or adapted into a teacher training workshop or a professional development class to educate K-5 teachers on how self-assessment can assist with student language growth.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved husband, who not only supported me throughout my graduate studies but also continually inspires me to grow and achieve.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to my advisor Dr. Plaisance, for all her support from the beginning to end of my studies. I would also like to thank all my MA TESOL instructors for their help and my fellow classmates for sharing this journey with me.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Assessment is a key part of teaching in the US educational system, and North Carolina is no exception. Creating effective means of measuring learner knowledge and understanding is vital because assessment not only assists teachers, funders and program administrators, but most importantly, it also benefits learners (Parrish, 2006). Currently, many of these learners are also English language learners (ELLs). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), as of the 2016-2017 school year, North Carolina's schools were home to more than 92,000 ELLs. This number continues to grow each year; therefore, it is vital that educators consider ways in which assessment can be adapted to fit the needs of this demographic.

In North Carolina, ELLs are required to participate in mandatory state testing, but they do receive accommodations for testing if identified as an ELL. One such accommodation is being allotted additional time for testing, as ESL students generally "require more time to process information" (Ariza et al., 2000, p. 264). To determine eligibility for accommodation, potential ELLs are required to first take an English language proficiency assessment, known as a WIDA screener (https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/screener). Despite clear guidance and many resources being made available to teachers of ELLs regarding standardized, teacher-led testing in North Carolina, there is less support when it comes to utilizing self-assessment as a tool for English language learning. Peregoy and Boyle (2007) believed that learner self-assessment is usually lacking in classrooms and my own experience as elementary school teacher in North Carolina supports this view.

In order to grasp the importance of self-assessment in the classroom, it is important to fully understand what is meant by self-assessment. Firstly, self-assessment should not be

confused with summative assessment, such as the End of Grade (EOG) tests or college exams. This type of high stakes, formal assessment can cause a great deal of anxiety for both students and teachers (Simpson, 2016). Moreover, because they are taken at the end of a grade or unit, the results cannot actually be used to guide and improve the students' learning, as it has already been completed. Conversely, self-assessment is a type of a less formal, formative assessment which can be taken during a course of study, therefore it can offer information to assist student growth.

Self-assessment in a school setting can be summarized as a method whereby students are motivated to measure their performance against fixed standards, which encourages natural self-reflection as well as goal setting (Bourke & Mentis, 2011). In other words, self-assessment is a "descriptive and evaluative act carried out by the student concerning his or her own work and academic abilities" (Brown & Harris, as cited in McMillan, 2013, p. 368).

When one considers how effectively self-assessment promotes learner autonomy, it is easy to appreciate the great potential this method has in terms of supporting ELLs in the classroom. This is because enhancing ELLs' independence and self-motivation improves their learning experience whilst also developing their vocabulary (Roessingh, 2014).

As well as fostering learning autonomy, self-assessment can further English language learning in a variety of other ways, such as:

> motivating students to learn and reflect on their own English learning; promote critical thinking and reflective practices in learning English; scaffold knowledge of English learning from different English language skills;…and foster commitment in learning English among many others. (Jamrus & Razali, 2019, p. 64)

It can therefore be argued that student self-assessment should be paramount, especially in a class with ELL students, due to the numerous benefits it can provide for these learners (Parrish, 2006).

Furthermore, self-assessment allows learners to realize their own strengths as well as areas they need to focus on more, which gives students control over their own learning (Gee, as cited in Faltis, 2006). Another reason to foster self-assessment in the classroom is that it provides feedback, which is extremely advantageous for ELLs' language development. Hammond (2015) praised the power of feedback in the culturally responsive classroom and Andrade and Du (2007) equated student self-assessment to feedback for the learner from the learner.

I am very interested in learning more about how I can utilize self-assessment to help the ELLs in my classroom; therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore previous research on this topic. I will be focusing specifically on studies that demonstrate the effects of using self-assessment with ELLs and how teachers have successfully implemented self-assessment activities for ELLs in the classroom. I also plan to investigate research that highlights the challenges associated with ELLs using self-assessment, and how to overcome them.

Based on the lack of emphasis placed on training or supporting teachers to foster self-assessment as a learning tool for ELLs, despite its many benefits, the goal of my research is to design a *K-5 ELL Self-Assessment Toolkit* for teachers. This Toolkit will include strategies and techniques such as rubrics and games that can be used to successfully implement self-assessment amongst ELLs. The Toolkit could also be adapted into a teacher training workshop or a professional development class. The main of the Toolkit is educate teachers on the benefits of ELLs using self-assessment, along with showing them ways to promote this in their own classrooms. As I am an elementary school teacher, the toolkit will be aimed at supporting ELLs in grades K-5.

I believe that providing teachers with this tool kit will not only benefit the ELLs, but their teachers too. This is because constantly assessing and giving individual feedback to each student, in addition to supporting the diverse needs of ELLs, can be a vast and time-consuming task for teachers. The use of self-assessment can alleviate some of this workload without depriving ELLs of the feedback and learning tools they need to succeed. Moreover, due to most of the emphasis being placed on formal assessments such as standardized, teacher-led testing of ELLs in North Carolina, I believe that many teachers are not even aware of the benefits of implementing self-assessment with these learners, which is another crucial reason to create the toolkit. As I complete my research, I expected to learn different self-assessment techniques that I could not only use to create my tool kit, but also to share with my coworkers and use with my own students.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this literature review, I first address the question: what is self-assessment? I then discuss the benefits of using self-assessment with ELLs. Next, I analyze the challenges of using self-assessment with ELLs and ways to overcome these obstacles. I conclude by providing strategies to enable mainstream teachers to incorporate self-assessment with their ELLs in the classroom. Additionally, this chapter identifies gaps in the literature on this topic and provides recommendations for further studies.

What is Self-Assessment?

Assessment involves using techniques and methods to collect necessary information to determine students' levels of comprehension, knowledge, and skills (Allan, 1999; Ekbatani & Pierson, 2000; Lambert & Lines, 2000). In general, assessment is viewed as a fundamental component of teaching, as it provides teachers with information on the level of ability or understanding of their students (Taras, 2005). This is especially true for ELLs, as it provides the opportunity to monitor their language acquisition and conceptual understanding of English (Montalvo-Balbed, 2012).

Traditionally, school assessment is formal and teacher-led, with standardized testing taking the most prominent role (Abeywickrama, 2012). Conversely, self-assessment is student-led and tends to be informal and formative (Jamrus & Razali, 2019). Formative assessment is usually on-going and classroom-based, and it can instantly provide information on a learner's progress (Short et al., 2018). It can therefore be used to give the learners not only an idea of how well they are doing, but it also makes them aware of the areas they need to improve on. Self-

assessment tends to focus on metacognitive skills and encourages students to develop into lifelong learners (Burns, 2005; McNamee & Jie-Qi, 2005).

Many forms of teacher-led or standardized testing are summative, meaning that they are completed at the end of a unit of study or grade; therefore, the results do not actually assist students' learning. On the other hand, self-assessment is a type of formative study that is ongoing throughout a unit of study, which means that the outcomes can be used to inform the students' learning or help them set future goals. Moreover, self-assessment not only directly informs student learning, but also acts as a learning tool in itself. In other words, self-assessment is assessment as learning, as well as assessment for learning (Thawabieh, 2017). Unlike multiple choice standardized testing, self-assessment is seen as an 'authentic' assessment (Ratminingsih, Marhaeni, & Vigayanti, 2018). This is because it measures learning in a way that is meaningful, as it gives students the chance to reflect on their achievements and areas for further development.

The Benefits of Using Self-Assessment with ELLs

First, several researchers have stated that self-assessment promotes learner autonomy (Bardine & Fulton, 2008; Vickers & Ene, 2006), which is "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action" (Little, 1991, p. 4). Learner autonomy is commonly accepted as an important goal to achieve when learning a second language (Yeung, 2019). Self-assessment can be used to help ELLs reach this target because it actively involves students in the assessment process, hence encouraging learners to become more responsible for their own learning (Thawabieh, 2017).

Second, researchers have also identified student-centered classrooms as a desirable setting for ELLs because student-centered instruction allows learners to develop "real-life"

English language skills, rather than simply memorizing vocabulary and grammar that is dictated to them by the class teacher (Courtney, 2020). According to Thawabieh (2017), self-assessment is very student-centered, as it is carried out by the learners themselves as opposed to the teacher, which is the epitome of a student-centered activity. Hence, therein lies another advantage of self-assessment.

In addition to being student-centered and promoting learner autonomy, self-assessment actively involves learners in determining the standard of their own work, which is recognized as a vital means of supporting student learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2006; Taras, 2010; Wride, 2017). As self-assessment involves students assessing the quality of their own ability, this inevitably promotes active engagement as well (Mulrooney, 2019). As research has demonstrated, the more that students are engaged in their learning process, the more focused they will be, and the more likely they are to have a meaningful learning experience (https://www.washington.edu/teaching/topics/engaging-students-in-learning/, n.d.).

Another benefit of self-assessment is that it provides instant feedback, as learners are assessing their own work. They do not have to wait for their teacher to assess or grade their work, which often results in feedback not being received until days or weeks after the task was completed. Hattie and Timperly (2007) stated that "feedback is one of the most powerful tools we have to improve learning" (p. 82). Without feedback, students will continue to make the same mistakes, which they may not even be aware of. This is particularly paramount with ELLs, as learners of an additional language are prone to making mistakes in their writing and speech. Feedback from self-assessment allows students to realize these mistakes immediately and is likely to elicit self-correction and lead to the improvement of their language skills (Short et al. 2018).

Using feedback not only improves performance, but it also clarifies misconceptions before they become too deeply entrenched and difficult to 'unlearn', which is another important aspect of teaching ELLs (Touchie, 1986). In addition to this, Zull (2002) believed that students who used feedback to advance their understanding or skill experienced a hit of the potent chemical *dopamine* in their brains, because making academic progress triggers the reward centers in the brain. A burst of dopamine increases learning retention, as it is linked to our memories and can therefore elicit our brains to retain the information (Rollins, 2018).

Self-reflection is another excellent learning tool for ELLs because it allows them to view their English ability objectively, which enables them to set attainable goals and understand the steps necessary to achieve them (Verner, 2017). Furthermore, Pretorius and Ford (2016) described self-reflection as a "reflection for learning" as they believed that it improved student progress by fostering a more progressive learning practice. Unfortunately, in the fast-paced classroom environment teachers often have a lot of material to cover in a limited amount of time. This can result in self-reflection frequently falling by the wayside.

However, self-assessment provides the ideal opportunity for student self-reflection, as this strategy already encourages students to make judgements about their own ability and learn from their mistakes, which is a very reflective process (Panadero & Alonso-Tapia, 2013). By reflecting on the organization of their dialogue as well as any errors and weaknesses in their English language skills, ELLs are more inclined to make progress in their language acquisition (Marhaeni & Artini, 2015).

Lastly, self-assessment allows students to set their own learning goals, as it requires them to identify their strengths and weaknesses (https://ar.cetl.hku.hk/self_peer.htm, n.d.). Self-assessment helps learners achieve goals too. Amabile and Kramer (2012) termed this concept *the progress*

principle, and argued that students confidence in their own abilities will grow if they are able to realize that they are progressing towards a goal. This highlights how self-assessment really is "assessment *for* learning" (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2004, p. 26).

The Challenges of Using Self-Assessment and Ways to Overcome Them

One challenge of using self-assessment is that many teachers are not familiar with it; standardized and teacher-led assessment tend to take precedence in the majority of public schools in the U.S. (Strauss, 2015). Mulrooney (2019) recently recognized this issue and noted that "[self-assessment] is not routinely carried out in all institutions" (p. 1), which demonstrates that this is a current, rather than a past, issue in the U.S. education system. Teachers are not as accustomed to using self-assessment as a feedback tool and may not have received the necessary training to feel equipped to do so. Thus, fluctuating from their regular, 'tried-and-tested' feedback methods might present a "huge challenge" (Lee, 2016, p. 525) to some teachers. One way to overcome this would be to provide teacher training on how to successfully implement self-assessment in the classroom, as well as educating teachers on the benefits of using self-assessment as a learning tool, such as the fact that self-assessment can help students develop language acquisition and increase ELL's independence (Jamrus & Razali, 2019).

Another challenge to overcome is the idea that, traditionally, teachers are often viewed by their students as being the ones responsible for assessing student ability (Thawabieh, 2017). Hence, students might feel that they should not be held accountable for assessment. This challenge can be overcome by teaching students the benefits of self-assessment versus teacher-led assessment (Shapiro et al. 2014). Teachers could also adapt self-assessment strategies to

make them as engaging as possible for students, as well as perhaps introducing a reward system and praise for students who take responsibility for their assessment when asked to do so.

Student anxiety may also present a barrier to implementing self-assessment successfully in the classroom (Pope, 2005). Firstly, there is 'test anxiety', which affects both native English-speaking students and ELLs: "The term *test anxiety* refers to the set of physical, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive responses that accompany the concern about the possible negative consequences or failure on an exam or similar evaluative situation" (Sieber, O'Neil, & Tobias, 1977; Zeidner, 1998, as cited in (Sarisu(Taş) & Büyükkarci, 2018, p. 362). Secondly, there is Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), which is specific to ELLs. *The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (Richards & Schmidt, 2002) defined *Language Anxiety* as "subjective feelings of apprehension and fear associated with language learning and use" (p. 285).

FLA can negatively impact language learning (Eginli & Solhi, 2020) and may also adversely affect the use of self-assessment with ELLs in the classroom because FLA may cause ELLs to "fear assessment" (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 128). Moreover, despite improving learner performance in collective tasks, a study found that self-assessment caused more stress for female students than male students (Pope, 2005). However, it is important to note that it is also possible to eradicate student anxiety surrounding self-assessment by presenting it in an appealing, low-pressure set-up. Teachers should emphasize that it is an informal assessment and provide lots of praise and positive reinforcement to students who successfully complete their self-assessment requirements.

An additional challenge of using self-assessment in the classroom is that teachers might not trust students to judge their own work correctly (Thawabieh, 2017) or teachers may feel that

learners simply lack the proficiency required to do so (Lee, 2016). Several studies have been carried out to investigate the accuracy of students' self-assessment skills. One found that:

> The quality and accuracy of [senior-level bachelor of science] pharmacy students' self-assessment skills were not as strong as expected, particularly given recent efforts to include self-assessment in the curriculum. Further work is necessary to ensure this important…competency and life skill is at the level expected for professional practice and continuous professional development. (Austin & Gregory, 2007, p.89).

This raises the question that, if native English speaking university students could not accurately self-assess themselves, how can elementary school teachers expect young, ESL learners to do so? The answer to this is teacher adaptation. Similar to how teachers adapt lessons to meet the needs of all learners, teachers must adapt self-assessments. Short et al. (2018) argued that, teachers of ELLs should also adapt their assessment according to the needs and ability level of their students.

If the self-assessment task is pitched correctly, then less proficient English speakers, as well as K-5 students, should be able to successfully complete it. To promote accuracy, it is vital that teachers ensure that explicit instructions and assessment criteria are explained, taught and modeled to the whole class before individual students embark on their own self-assessment (Shapiro et al., 2014). According to Shapiro et al. (2014), it is often lack of clarity on the teachers' part, rather than lack of student accuracy, that lead to situations where students find tasks too challenging.

In other words, if the self-assessment task is clearly outlined, this can help overcome inaccurate results. Shapiro et al. (2014) went on to suggest that an effective way to make the assessment criteria clear to learners is to use a rubric, which is one of the strategies I will be

implementing in my *K-5 ELL Self-Assessment Toolkit* for teachers. I will discuss this method in further detail in Chapter Three.

However, even if the self-assessment guidelines are clear, "self-assessment can be subjective because students may not be sincere and may even over-evaluate their own performance" (https://ar.cetl.hku.hk/self_peer.htm, n.d.). Whilst overestimated student self-scoring (Herzog & Bowman, 2011) might be assumed by most; Kaufman, Felder and Fuller (2000) discovered that learners were actually more likely to report deflated self-scores than inflated ones. Conversely, Falchikov's (1993) study found that students tend to neither over nor under inflate their self-scores. A study conducted by Stefani (1994) supported these findings, and argued that student self-assessment was just as trustworthy as peer and teacher assessment. A potential solution to the issue of inaccurate self-scoring would be to have the instructor, as well as peers, monitor and check self-assessment scores. In addition to this, students could be asked to provide evidence to justify their self-scoring, such as meeting specific criteria on an assessment rubric, which would help avoid learners over or under-scoring.

Finally, cultural differences might also present a challenge to successful self-assessment strategies in the classroom. This is due to the fact that, in many cultures, the teacher is seen as the leader: and thus students may feel teachers should dictate the facts whilst the students simply memorize them, without contributing any original input of their own (Ariza, 2002). Shapiro et al. (2014) supported this point in relation to self-assessment, stating that "Research has shown that differing cultural background[s]…can be a hinderance for international students – particularly when it comes to assessment" (p. 61). For example, some ELLs might be accustomed to cultures where students are not supposed to be creative and inward thinking; thus, doing so may make them feel uneasy. Therefore, teachers should be aware that ELLs could need to be taught how to

take responsibility for their own learning in the form of self-reflection and evaluation (Ariza, 2002), in order to be able to successfully self-assess their own work. Ariza (2002) also suggested using thought-provoking questions to assist learners in self-assessment, but she advised that this technique requires a lot of supervision and support on the teachers' part.

How to Successfully Foster Self-assessment with ELLs in the Classroom

Below are the main points to consider in order to successfully foster self-assessment with ELLs in the elementary classroom:

- *Use Self-Assessment Formatively:* Although self-assessment can be used as a summative assessment, i.e. at the end of a topic or grading period, in order for it to be fully beneficial it should be used as a formative assessment, i.e. during a topic or grading period. This to ensure that the results this process yields to the learner are able to inform their learning, and thus improve their learning outcomes (Klute et al., 2017). Furthermore, formative assessment can be informal, engaging and flexible (Zook, 2017). On the other hand, summative, formal assessment tends to be time-consuming, anxiety inducing, does not promote student creativity or motivation, and cannot be used to inform or cultivate student learning (Brown, 2019).
- *Adapt:* As Short et al. (2018) explained in *The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners,* in order to effectively teach ELLs, teachers must not only "monitor and assess student language development" (p. 58), but they must also "design varied and valid assessments…to access student learning" (p. 60). In other words, just as lessons should be planned and differentiated to meet the needs of all learners, so should self-assessments.

- *Use Scaffolding:* One way self-assessment can be differentiated is through the use of scaffolding. Shapiro et al. (2014) described scaffolding as "a key concept in second language acquisition" (p. 55). According to Sackstein (2016), "With the right scaffolds in place, reflection and self-assessment can be a rich way to extend the depth of independent learning and also aid in inform the teacher about valuable data around growth and understanding" (http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/work_in_progress/2016/05/student_self-assessment_practi.html). This scaffolding could be in the form of teacher support, peer support, prompts, modeling, graphic organizers, or rubrics (Andrade et al., 2010), which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 3.
- *Explain:* Shapiro et al. (2014) also highlighted the need for clear instructions as well as grading criteria when asking ELLs to use self-assessment. This is a helpful tool for all students, but it is especially vital for ELLs as their native cultures' academic expectations might vastly differ from those in the U.S.
- *Prepare:* In addition to explaining their expectations, teachers also need to prepare their ELLs in order for them to implement self-assessment correctly. A great way to do this is through teacher modelling which can expose ELLs to "examples of mastery" (https://www.edutopia.org/practice/mastering-self-assessment-deepening-independent-learning-through-arts, 2016), which I examine closer in the following chapter.
- *Make it Student-led:* Even though teachers might still need to scaffold or supervise self-assessment with younger or less proficient ELLs, one of the things that makes self-assessment so effective is that it's student-centered, which has been shown to help grow learners' English proficiency (Jones, 2007). To allow ELLs to take the lead even more,

Hill and Flynn (2006) suggested allowing them to help create their own rubric, arguing that "when rubrics are jointly constructed, there is a clearer understanding of what constitutes an acceptable performance, and the rubric score becomes far more meaningful than a…teacher-created rubric" (p. 33). Similarly, if a student's English proficiency is very low, they could perhaps create a rubric in their native language to help them understand the task (Ford, 2005).

- *Backward design:* One of Covey's insights from *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (2012) is to "Begin with the End in Mind" (p. 95). This idea can be applied to successfully fostering self-assessment in the classroom, but in educational terms this technique is known as backward design (Fink, 2003; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). This is when the teacher first decides on the learning objectives, then chooses assessments to measure students' achievement in relation to the learning objectives and lastly plans a way to develop these assessments throughout the topic or grading period. This works well with self-assessment, as backward design "prepare[s] students for formative assessment" and self-assessment is "most effective when it is integrated throughout the term, rather than only at the end" (Shapiro et al., 2014, p. 54). Backward design also promotes authenticity because it ensures that the self-assessment relates to the actual curriculum and assigned tasks; therefore, it can provide a true evaluation regarding the students' progress (Ariza et al., 2002).
- *Goal setting:* Echevarria and Graves (2003) advised using self-assessment to encourage ELLs to set goals, as this practice highlights to students their area(s) of weakness, which allows them to realize what they should focus on developing.
- *Gather Feedback:* Although self-assessment is a way to provide students with feedback for themselves, it is vital to not forget to allow students to provide feedback to the teacher regarding the self-assessment process. This a "mutually beneficial endeavor" that has

"been shown to impact both teachers and students positively" (http://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/SPS_Planning_comms_student-feedback-on-instruction-CEI.pdf, 2014). After all, as the learners are the ones taking the self-assessments, the only way teachers can truly measure how successful, user-friendly and effectively differentiated they are is to receive feedback from the students about this (Shafer, 2017). In addition to this feedback, allowing learners to have input in their learning in this way demonstrates that teachers care about their point of view, which empowers and engages them (Pandolpho, 2018).

- *Variety:* Finally, a key point to consider is that, like everything else, students require variety in their assessment methods to keep them engaged. Ariza et al. (2000) believed it was important that "student performance is assessed from a variety of perspectives, instead of relying on a limited number of measurements; this provides a global perspective from which to draw conclusions about progress" (p. 270).

Hence, even though there are many advantages of implementing self-assessment in the classroom, obviously teachers should still use other types of assessment to gather information on student growth.

Gaps in the Literature, Recommendations and Next Steps

The key gaps in literature I came across when researching this topic was regarding the use of self-assessment with ELLs in the elementary classroom, as the majority of the literature on using self-assessment with ELLs tended to focus on either high school or university students. Therefore, it is my recommendation that more studies on the effectiveness of using self-

assessments be carried out using elementary school teachers and students as the participants. It is essential to research strategies that support ELLs in elementary schools because there is actually a higher percentage of ELLs in lower grades than upper grades, partially due to some students who were initially considered as ELLs upon beginning elementary school who achieved proficiency in English before entering middle school or high school (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018).

The lack of information on results or guidance in implementing self-assessment with ELLs in an elementary setting provides justification for my project: A *K-5 ELL Self-Assessment Teacher Toolkit.* The next two chapters present the design of my project, which is aimed at bridging this gap and providing elementary school teachers with the knowledge and strategies necessary to foster self-assessment activities with ELLs in their classroom. This is achieved through a series of strategies and techniques such as mind maps, rubrics and games, compiled in a PDF document for ease of reference. The toolkit will also educate teachers on the benefits and importance of implementing self-assessment with ELLs, and include practical tips, suggestions, and recommendations for further reading to help promote success in this area.

Chapter Three: Project Design

In this chapter, I explain the rationale behind designing a *K-5 ELL Self-Assessment Teacher Toolkit,* as well as outline its design. In Chapter 1, I discussed how the use of self-assessment can positively benefit ELLs; why this is an important issue for teachers to address; how self-assessment differs from standardized, summative testing; what I will produce; and who I believed my project would benefit. In Chapter 2, I went into more detail regarding the definition of self-assessment and the advantages of using this method with ELLs, such as the promotion of learning autonomy, student-centered classrooms, active engagement, meaningful learning experiences, self-reflection and goal setting, as well as providing instant feedback to learners. Following this, I explored the challenges of using self-assessment, such as inexperienced or unprepared teachers, student beliefs surrounding assessment, student test anxiety, foreign language anxiety, student ability and reliability, the subjective manner of self-assessment, and cultural differences. Next, I made suggestions on how to overcome these challenges and discussed the main points to consider in order to successfully foster self-assessment with ELLs in the classroom. These included using self-assessment formatively, making adaptions where necessary, using scaffolding, providing clear instructions, preparing students well, making self-assessment student-led, using backward design, setting goals, gathering feedback and continuing to use a variety of assessment methods. I concluded Chapter 2 by sharing the gaps I had discovered in the literature on this topic as well as my recommendations for further studies.

Chapter 3 takes the ideas and knowledge outlined in the previous chapters to justify the structure of my project: a *K-5 ELL Self-Assessment Teacher Toolkit.* The Toolkit will take the form of a handbook and will provide guidance and strategies to enable teachers to successfully

foster self-assessment as a learning tool for ELLs in their classroom. This handbook also has the potential to be developed into a teacher training class or in-service teacher professional development workshop, to educate teachers on the benefits of using self-assessment to support ELLs in their classroom, as well as to provide teachers with practical advice and methods to help them implement this learning tool. The content includes exercises such as games, graphic organizers and rubrics that support the use of self-assessment with ELLs.

I believe that my project is needed because, although formative assessment like self-assessment, "can have a powerful impact on student motivation and achievement (Cauley & McMillan, 2010, p. 1); this topic is currently severely neglected in accredited teacher training programs in the U.S. (Stiggins, as cited in Wise, 1993). Moreover, this is a global issue, as Sardareh (2016) pointed out that many ELL teachers in Malaysia were unaware of how formative assessment can be used to advance learners' proficiency and to inform future instruction.

After completing a literature review on using self-assessment as a learning tool for ELLs, I discovered that there is a lack of research and information on this topic in regards to elementary school students. Instead, the studies tended to focus on older students, such as those in high school or college. This gap provides further justification for my project, as the *K-5 ELL Self-Assessment Teacher Toolkit* is specifically aimed at supporting elementary school students (grades K-5).

Whilst in-service teacher professional development workshops might touch briefly on the topic of assessment, this is often in relation to a variety of other classroom topics. This means that, not only is assessment and its sub genres, such as formative and self-assessment, not covered deeply enough, combining an array of topics in professional development sessions can

lead to an “information overload without coherence, [which] often prevents any of it from making it into the teacher’s instructional repertoire” (Rucker, 2018, para. 5). This why I have chosen to focus my toolkit specifically on formative self-assessment only. It is also important that this toolkit includes materials that are linguistically and culturally comprehensible to ELLs and can be effectively used and adapted by their teachers (Levine & McCloskey, 2009; Peregoy & Boyle, 2007).

The *K-5 ELL Self-Assessment Teacher Toolkit* will use games as a way of engaging ELLs in self-assessment. “The use of games in language classrooms is popular among many English-language teachers and educators. Engagement in game-based activities gives learners a chance not only to experiment with the language being learned in a natural and fun way but also to sharpen their English skills” (Quy, 2019, para. 1). Game-based learning has also been shown to help increase concentration, enjoyment, and learner achievement (Kamnardsiri et al., 2017). Prensky (2001), found that the use of games motivated students even when they felt that the subject matter was too hard to comprehend. Likewise, even learners who initially expressed a disinterest in the content were still motivated by game-based learning (Lieberman, as cited in Alfadhli & Alsumait, 2015; Praet & Desoete, 2014; Vorderer & Byant, 2006).

The Toolkit also features graphic organizers. Stenson (2006) defined graphic organizers as “a visual aid to demonstrate and concentrate on the important information that allows the student to maintain more knowledge so he or she can improve his or her reading comprehension” (p. 40). Herrera and Murry (2005) believed that providing ELLs with visual support, such as graphic organizers, is extremely beneficial. This is because, graphic organizers’ use of visual depictions alongside minimal text enables students with limited English proficiency to still understand them (Jiang & Grabe, 2007). Furthermore, in Chapter 2, the literature identified

scaffolding as a way to support the self-assessment of ELLs (Sackstein, 2016) and graphic organizers are a prime example of scaffolding, as they provide visual assistance (Herrera & Murry, 2005). In addition to this, Alturki's (2017) study found that the use of graphic organizers helped ELLs to consolidate their ideas, which is a great way to promote self-assessment. Sam and Rajan (2013) supported this idea by suggesting that teachers use graphic organizers in the ELL classroom in order to improve the process of learning as well as for student achievement. Moreover, graphic organizers have been shown to support the learning of native learners as well as ELLs (Stenson, 2006); therefore, this is an aid that will benefit the whole class.

Self-assessment rubrics are provided in the *K-5 ELL Self-Assessment Teacher Toolkit* as well. Many studies have highlighted the advantages of using rubrics for the assessment of ELLs (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1986; Marzano, 2000; Montalvo-Balbed, 2012) and it has been noted that most learners view rubrics positively (Reddy & Andrade, 2010). Not only do rubrics allow for more accurate scoring, they also help ELLs to understand their expected learning standards and goals, which can improve the quality of their work and performance (Mahmoudi & Buğra, 2020). Additionally, rubrics can be used for instructional purposes as well as for evaluation (Andrade, 2005; Schneider, 2006). Therefore, providing explicit instructions and grading criteria is essential for the success of ELLs (Shapiro et al., 2014), and rubrics can effectively 'kill two birds with one stone' in this case. I also included blank rubric templates in the toolkit because it is important that, where possible, rubrics are jointly created by the learners and the teacher, which aids comprehension and gives the rubric score more meaning (Hill & Flynn, 2006).

Chapter Four: The Project

Self-Assessment Teacher Toolkit for English Language Learners (ELLs)

Grades K-5

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Why Use Self-Assessment as Learning Tool for ELLs?

Many studies have shown that using self-assessment as a learning tool can be advantageous for ELLs (Burns, 2005; McNamee & Jie-Qi, 2005). In addition to this, the benefits of formative self-assessment for ELLs far outweigh those of summative, teacher-led assessments or standardized testing (Ratminingsih, Marhaeni, & Vigayanti, 2018; Thawabieh, 2017). This is because, unlike those other forms of assessment, self-assessment is actually "assessment *for* learning" (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2004, p. 26). As discussed in Chapter 2, self-assessment can support ELL growth and increase their language proficiency because it promotes the following:

- ⇒ **Learner Autonomy** (Bardine & Fulton, 2008; Vickers & Ene, 2006)
- ⇒ **Meaningful Learning Experiences** (Thawabieh, 2017)
- ⇒ **Student-Centered Learning/Active Involvement of Learners** (Boud & Falchikov, 2006; Taras, 2010; Wride, 2017)
- ⇒ **Increased Engagement** (Mulrooney, 2019)
- ⇒ **Instant Feedback (**Hattie & Timperly, 2007)**:** Which can result in **Improved Performance** (Short et al. 2018)**, Clarification of Misconceptions** (Touchie, 1986) and **Increased Learning Retention** (Rollins, 2018)
- ⇒ **Self-Reflection (**Pretorius & Ford, 2016)
- ⇒ **Setting Attainable Learning Goals (**Verner, 2017)
- ⇒ **Achieving Academic Goals (**Amabile & Kramer, 2012)

Despite these numerous advantages, many teachers are not currently using self-assessment as a learning tool for ELLs (Peregoy & Boyle, 2007; Mulrooney, 2009). For this reason, I have chosen to create a *K-5 ELL Self-Assessment Teacher Toolkit* as my project in this chapter.

How to Successfully Implement Self-Assessment as a Learning Tool for ELLs

⇒ **Explain***:* Before ELLs perform any self-assessment, they need to be provided with clear instructions as well as the grading criteria, to ensure that they have the best chance to succeed.

⇒ **Prepare:** In addition to explaining the instructions, teachers should also prepare their ELLs in order for them to implement self-assessment correctly. A great way to achieve this is through *teacher modeling.*

⇒ **Make it Student-Led:** Research indicates that student-centered activities tend to help improve learners' English proficiency the most. Therefore, it is important to allow ELLs to take the lead where possible. Blank rubric templates are provided in this Toolkit for that purpose.

⇒ **Use L1:** If a student's English proficiency is very low, they can benefit from the use of their first language, in a rubric or graphic organizer, to help them understand the task.

⇒ **Use Visual Aids:** Similar to the use of the L1, visual aids can help learners with low English skills to understand the task.

⇒ **Use Self-Assessment Formatively:** Self-assessment should be used formatively (i.e. frequently and *during* a grading period or unit of study as opposed to once at the end) so that the results can be used to inform student learning and future lesson planning.

⇒ **Adapt as Necessary***:* Just as lessons should be planned and differentiated to meet the needs of all learners, so should self-assessments. Teachers should use student feedback (see below) and the results of prior assessments to inform the differentiation of self-assessments.

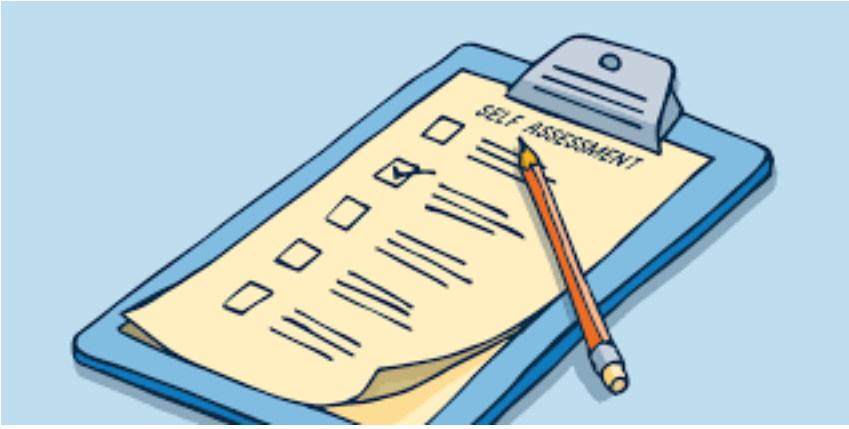
⇒ **Gather Student Feedback:** Teachers must not forget to allow students to provide teacher feedback regarding the self-assessment process. As the learners are the ones taking the self-assessments, the only way teachers can truly measure how successful, user-friendly and effectively differentiated they are is to receive feedback from the students about this.

⇒ **Use Scaffolding:** Self-assessment can be differentiated to meet individual ELLs' needs through the use of scaffolding. This scaffolding could be in the form of teacher support, peer support, prompts, modeling, graphic organizers, or rubrics.

⇒ **Backward design***:* When planning self-assessments, "Begin with the End in Mind" (Covey, 2012, p. 95), by first deciding on the learning objectives, then choose assessments to measure students' achievement in relation to the learning objectives and lastly, plan a way to develop these assessments throughout the topic or grading period.

⇒ **Variety:** Remember that students require variety in their assessment methods to keep them engaged. Even though self-assessment is an excellent learning tool, other assessment techniques should continue to be implemented in the classroom.

*For additional guidance on how to successfully implement self-assessment as a learning tool for ELLs in the classroom, please refer to the '***Further Reading'** *section at the end of the Toolkit.*



Self-Assessment Games

Below are some ideas for self-assessment in the form of games. Some are to be played individually while others will require small groups. The games should be adapted where necessary and can be used for native speaking students as well as ELLs if the class is mixed.

⇒ **Finger Vote Self-Assessment Game:** A small group of students should sit or stand in a circle. They may use a spinning device in the center of the circle or draw names out of a hat to decide who goes first. The first player should think of one of their strengths in relation to the current learning objective and say it out loud. The rest of the group should raise a hand with a show of 1 - 5 fingers. 1 finger means they strongly disagree whereas 5 fingers means they strongly agree. The first player should visually observe the group's votes. Then, move clockwise around the circle until everyone in the group has shared a strength. Next, return to the first player, who should share an area for development with the group. Repeat the finger voting and allow everyone in the group to have a turn. As an extension activity, each member of the group could record in a journal the results of the voting and reflect on whether it has changed their views on their own strengths or their areas that require growth.

⇒ **Create a Board Game:** Each student should make a board game to self-assess their knowledge of a concept, topic or book (this could be fiction or non-fiction). The board games should contain questions and answers (the teacher can decide how many they require the students to create, according to their age and ability). This game should then be played by their peers and/or teacher to check the accuracy of the learners' answers.

⇒ **Roll the Dice Game:** Give each student a 6 sided dice. Have them roll it and answer the question labeled with the number that they rolled, by writing a paragraph on a piece of paper or in a learning journal. The questions below can be adapted to be more specific to a certain task or to better meet the diverse needs of the learner(s):

1. What is one thing you learned today?
2. What is one thing you already knew?
3. What is one thing you want to remember?
4. How can you sum up what you learned today with one word?
5. Can you describe an "aha" moment that you had today?
6. What is one thing you are still confused about?

⇒ **Digital Self-Assessment Games:** There is a wide range of games on websites or apps that can be used for individual student self-assessment using laptop computers or iPads. Teachers are able to tailor the assessments to meet the needs of their students before they access them. These include Kahoot, Quizlet and Formative. Refer to this website for links to 17 digital formative self-assessment tools: https://wabisabilearning.com/blogs/assessment/17-formative-digital-assessment-tools

Self-Assessment Graphic Organizers

3-2-1 Reflections

Three ideas I learned in class were _____, _____, _____.

I can use these ideas by doing _____ and _____.

What confused me most in class was _____.

*** Figure 1:** *3-2-1 Reflections.* Retrieved from h https://www.teachervision.com/lesson-planning/graphic-organizer

Student Goals Checklist

STUDENT

I am good at...	I need to work on...
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

My plan to improve is

_____

_____

_____

If my plan doesn't work then I'll

_____

_____

_____

I'll know my plan is working when

_____

_____

_____

*** Figure 2:** *Student Goals Checklist.*. Retrieved from https://www.teachervision.com/lesson-planning/graphic-organizer

Self-Assessment Scale

1	2	3	4
Even with help I don't get it.	Help me a little, and I got it.	I need some more practice.	I need a challenge or can help someone else.

I chose the number_____ because...

*** Figure 3:** *Self-Assessment Scale..* Retrieved from https://www.teachervision.com/lesson-planning/graphic-organizer

Daily Tasks Checklist

Task	Did you complete it?	How did it go?

*** Figure 4:** *Daily Tasks Checklist*.. Retrieved from https://www.teachervision.com/lesson-planning/graphic-organizer

Self-Assessment Rubrics

Criteria	Advanced	Proficient	Basic

*** Figure 5:** *Blank Self-Assessment Rubric.* Retrieved from https://www.teachervision.com/lesson-planning/graphic-organizer

Name _____ Date _____

SCORING RUBRIC RATING SCALE

Criteria	Rating			
	Low	Average		High
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4

*** Figure 6:** *Scoring Rubric Rating Scale.* Retrieved from https://www.teachervision.com/lesson-planning/graphic-organizer

Individual Activity Rubric

Name _____ Date _____

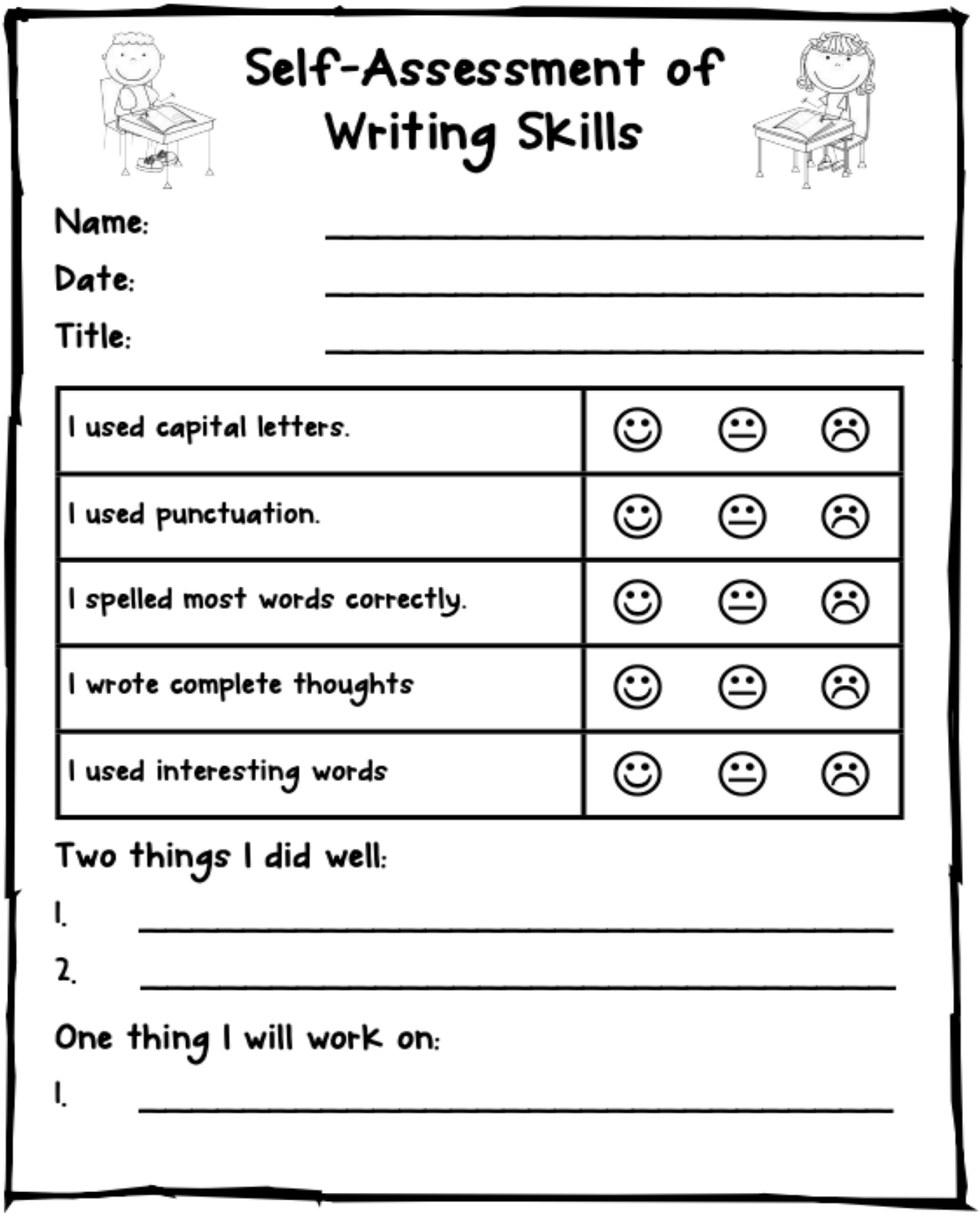
Chapter Number _____ Activity _____

Directions

Check one box in each row to finish each sentence. Give each check mark the assigned number of points. Add the points in each column. Then, add across the bottom row to find the total score.

POINTS	10	9	8	7	6	
For this activity, (student's name) _____	all of the time	most of the time	half of the time	less than half of the time	none of the time	
Followed directions						
Asked questions when help was needed						
Worked independently when required						
Used appropriate resources and materials						
Completed assigned tasks						
Showed an understanding of the content						
Presented materials without errors						
Explained thinking with support						
_____						
_____						
POINTS	+	+	+	+	=	TOTAL SCORE

*** Figure 7:** *Individual Activity Rubric.* Retrieved from https://www.teachervision.com/lesson-planning/graphic-organizer



Self-Assessment of Writing Skills

Name: _____

Date: _____

Title: _____

I used capital letters.	☺	😐	☹
I used punctuation.	☺	😐	☹
I spelled most words correctly.	☺	😐	☹
I wrote complete thoughts	☺	😐	☹
I used interesting words	☺	😐	☹

Two things I did well:

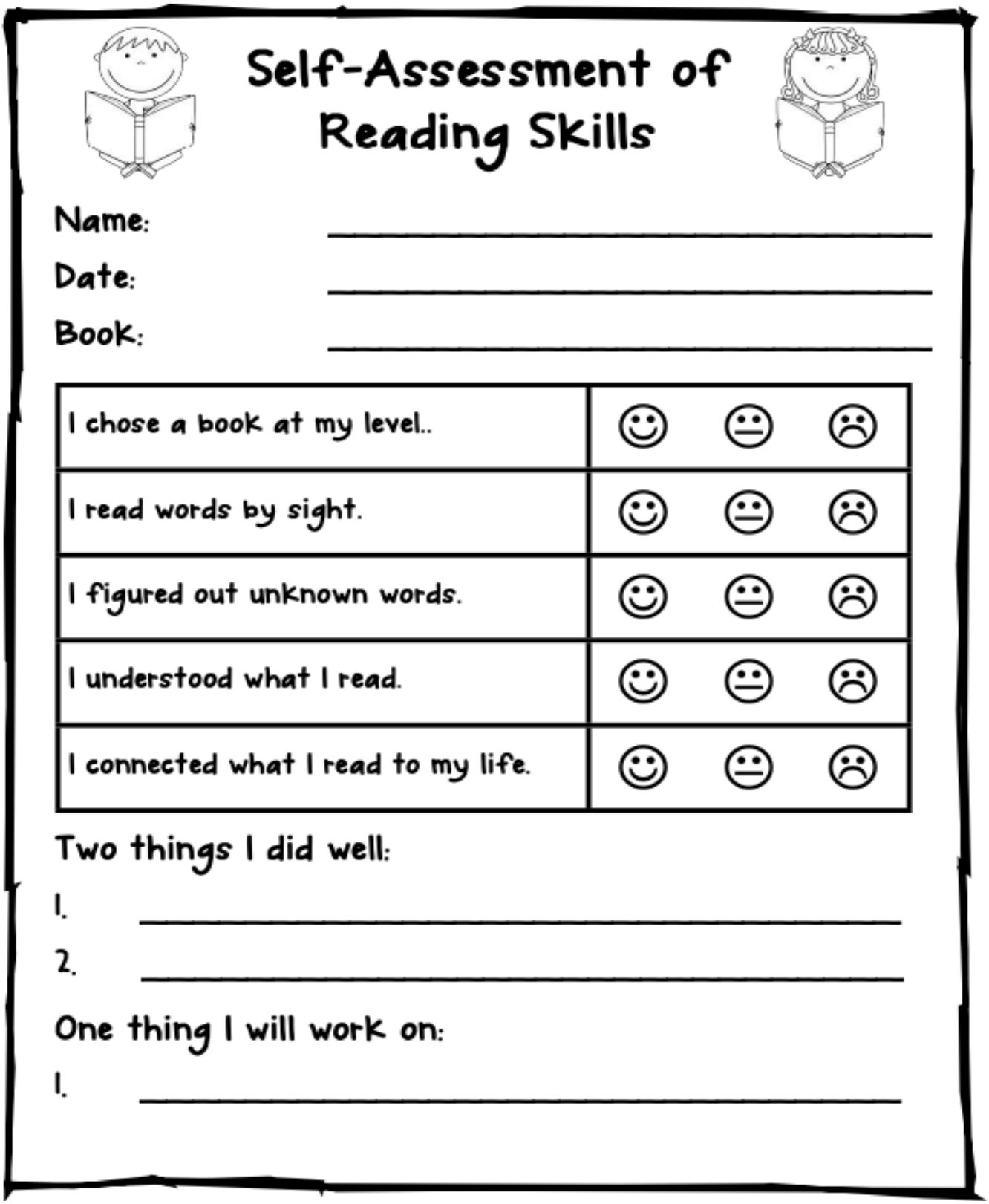
1. _____

2. _____

One thing I will work on:

1. _____

*** Figure 8:** *Self-Assessment of Writing Skills.* Retrieved from https://www.writingteachersroadmap.com/blog



Self-Assessment of Reading Skills

Name: _____

Date: _____

Book: _____

I chose a book at my level..	☺	😐	☹
I read words by sight.	☺	😐	☹
I figured out unknown words.	☺	😐	☹
I understood what I read.	☺	😐	☹
I connected what I read to my life.	☺	😐	☹

Two things I did well:

1. _____

2. _____

One thing I will work on:

1. _____

*** Figure 9:** *Self-Assessment of Reading Skills.* Retrieved from https://www.writingteachersroadmap.com/blog

*** Figure 10:** *Student Created Self-Assessment of Rubric* Retrieved from https://www.thesmartteacher.com/exchange/resource/1206/Self-Assessment-Rubric

Additional Self-Assessment Strategies

Below are some further strategies than can be used for student self-assessment:

⇒ **Traffic Light Self-Assessment:** Students display a traffic light colored card, cup or flip-chart to represent their level of understanding and/or achievement.

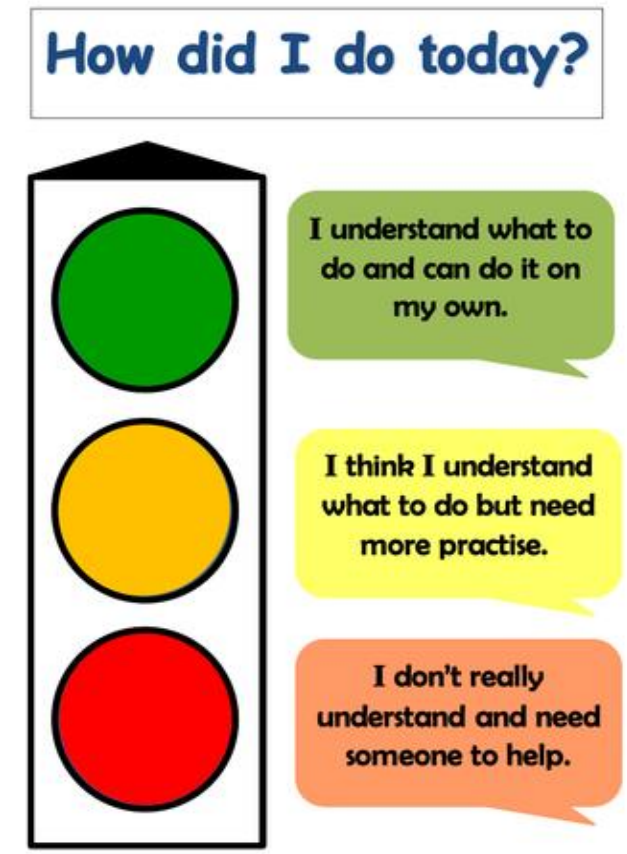


Figure 11: *Traffic Light Self-Assessment* Retrieved from https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/

⇒ **Smiley Face Self-Assessment:** Similarly to Traffic Light Self-Assessment, students either draw or select a face to represent their level of understanding and/or achievement.

* **Figure 12:** *Smiley Face Self-Assessment* Retrieved from http://www.justteachit.co.uk/product/smiley-face-assessment-labels-cards/

⇒ **Thumbs Self-Assessment:** Students should show either a thumbs up, thumbs down or a thumbs in the middle to represent their level of understanding and/or achievement.

*** Figure 13:** *Thumbs Self-Assessment* Retrieved from https://tpet.co.uk/downloads/thumbs-up-self-assessment-cards/

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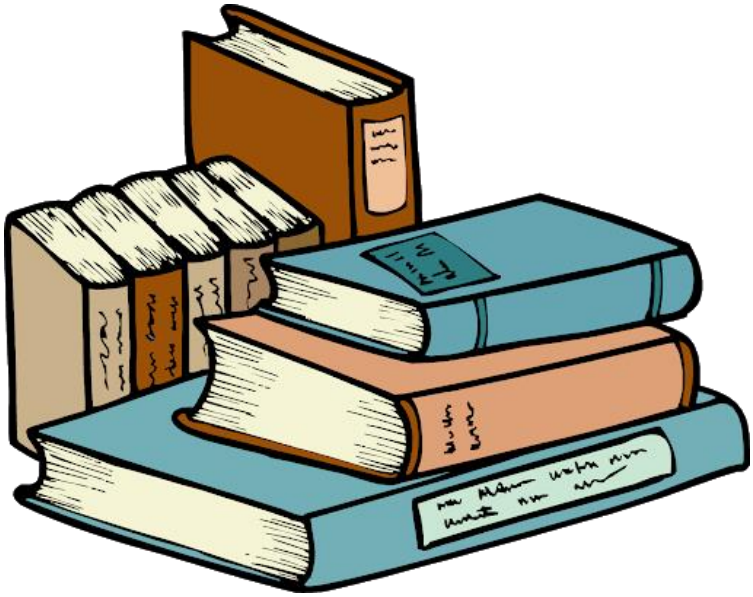

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Chapter Five: Conclusion

As the number of ELLs in schools across America continues to rise, it is important to provide teachers with effective learning tools to meet the individual needs of these students. Assessment is and always will be a significant aspect of every classroom. However, teacher development and focus tend to focus solely on standardized and teacher-led summative assessment. Whilst these type of assessments might be of value to teachers, funders and program administrators by providing data on student achievement, this does not help the learner.

On the other hand, formative, learner-centered assessment, such as self-assessment, provides a great deal of support to ELLs. Unfortunately, due to the aforementioned focus on standardized testing, self-assessment is often underused in the classroom. As a result, teachers are likely to overlook or simply be unaware of the many advantages self-assessment can afford ELLs. This is especially true in elementary schools, even though they usually have a higher percentage of ELLs than middle or high schools. As an elementary school teacher myself, I have personal experience with this issue, which inspired me to conduct further research into this topic and come up with a possible solution.

Having reviewed the literature on self-assessment, my beliefs were confirmed as I found that it fosters a vast array of benefits for ELLs. These include but are not limited to: the promotion of learning autonomy, student-centered classrooms, active engagement, meaningful learning experiences, self-reflection and goal setting, as well as providing instant feedback to learners; all of which are advantageous in developing English proficiency. This highlights the imperative need to educate and train teachers on how to implement self-assessment as a learning tool for ELLs in their classrooms. To address this issue, I created the *K-5 ELL Self-Assessment*

Teacher Toolkit: a handbook that can be used by individual elementary classroom teachers or adapted into a teacher development workshop or a professional development class to educate elementary school teachers on how self-assessment can assist with L2 language growth.

Whilst reviewing the literature on using self-assessment as a learning tool for ELLs, I noticed that there was a distinct lack of research within the K-5 age group. The studies tended to be carried out at colleges or in middle or high schools as opposed to elementary schools, despite the latter being the educational institute who often has the largest population of ELLs. I hope that this need is realized by researchers and more studies are carried out in this area, which will provide data to better inform schools, teachers and teacher training courses. Due to this lack of information, it was somewhat difficult to create a Self-Assessment Toolkit specifically for K-5 students and I feel that there is more material that could be added to the Toolkit in the future once further studies have been carried out. Nevertheless, I am still pleased with the final outcome as I feel it serves its intended purpose: to educate teachers about the reasons for and ways to utilize self-assessment as a learning tool for ELLs in their classroom.

Teachers face many challenges and demands in their line of work, which can present a barrier to introducing new techniques to their repertoire, as they may lack the time or energy to do so. Therefore, an important goal for me when creating the Toolkit was to provide the teachers who will be using it with as much guidance and information as possible to add self-assessment to their teaching practice. My hope was that if I did so, teachers would feel that this is an achievable feat. Creating this project was a wonderful learning opportunity for me personally, as it has aided my own professional development as an elementary school teacher. This is because, when researching different self-assessment methods for the Toolkit, I gained insight into new strategies that I can implement with ELLs in my own classroom. I am hopeful that the Toolkit I created

will also encourage other teachers to harness the many advantages of self-assessment methods to meet the diverse needs of their own ELLs and help them to develop their English proficiency.

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